

WARD'STM

Using a Plant Press

10 W 0800

10 W 0802

15 W 4063

Entire plants and plant structures, such as leaves and flowers, can be preserved by simply pressing them flat and drying them completely in a flattened position. This technique requires no chemical fixatives and very little storage space. In addition, it is a simple procedure and properly prepared specimens will last indefinitely. The one disadvantage is that dried, pressed specimens do lose their natural color and become yellowed or brownish, although this can be avoided to some degree with rapid drying.

The key to successful preparation is to dry fresh specimens as rapidly as possible under constant pressure, as if making a specimen "sandwich". To do this, place an open corrugated ventilator on the bottom of the plant press and place a sheet of botanical blotting paper on the ventilator. Plants or plant parts should then be carefully arranged on a sheet of newspaper. Arrange them in such a way as to show the undersurface of at least one leaf. Fold the newspaper to enclose the plant, then place it on the blotting paper. Place a second sheet of blotting paper over the top of the newspaper, and then place a second ventilator sheet on top of that. The open corrugations of the ventilator sheets should be in contact with the blotter. Continue building sections in this manner for all of the plant material you intend to press.

Once you have created your "specimen sandwich", place the top of the plant press over the last ventilator and tighten the straps (or rubber bands in the case of 10 W 0802) to apply strong, uniform pressure on the enclosed plants. This prevents extreme wrinkling as the plants dry. A fan or heat lamp may also be used to speed the drying process. Most plants will dry completely in 48 hours; however, if the plants contain excessive moisture, it may be necessary to change blotters after a few hours. Once the plants are dry, they may be stored indefinitely on herbarium sheets.

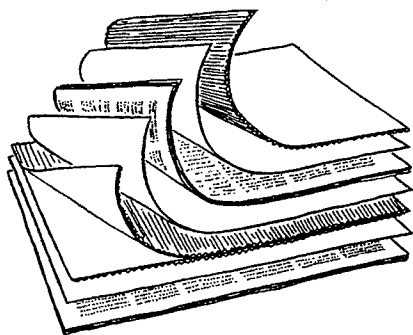


Figure 1. Showing the sequence of corrugated cardboard, botanical driers, and newspaper for use in the plant press.

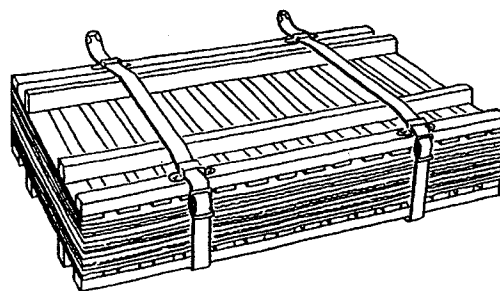


Figure 2. The plant press filled and straps tightened for drying and pressing.

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